



VERIS RFP Project Site Visit and Interview Notes

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General Information

Topic: Day in the Life

Reports and correspondence

The GRs feel that whatever is put into VERIS, they should be able to get out of VERIS as raw data (not PDFs). They would like to be able to run queries. The Excel outputs they get are unusable and non-customizable. Their inputs should enable outputs in Excel. The reports “bomb out” a lot during creation.

When lawsuits come up, the localities are asked for a lot of correspondence from VERIS and they have to download lots of data. Some is in PDF format. Some in Excel format. However, the GRs feel it should all be in Excel so they can work with it to produce exactly what it needed. They cannot work with PDFs.

They’d like the ability to customize the reports.

They run daily error and validation reports. These reports are already in alpha order which make them easier to use. The error and validation report is a PDF report. VERIS generates a report of any changes to registrations from the day before. It allows the GRs to verify that the person is registered and validates the accuracy (compare against the paper registration).

ELECT has done a good job recently at listening to the localities on reports. For example, they have listened regarding an enhancement on the letter that goes out to a deceased voter’s family. The localities thought the original letter was harsh so ELECT softened it up.

The NCOA process will catch voters if they move – sometimes. If they never vote, they are active forever. These folks should all start out as inactive in the system. If you vote in a federal election, then the clock starts.

What generates correspondences:

- Denials (felon, mentally incapacitated, incomplete)
- Polling place changes
- Incompletes
- Under age
- Citizenship
- Address issue
- Redistricting
- NCOA
- Unregistered provisional voter



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Correspondence can create a lot of undeliverable statuses. They just had a polling location change and as a result they had 10-15 undeliverable statuses for one precinct.

The GRs are sticklers about using apartment numbers. They immediately deny if one is not listed. They do not try and contact the voter because if you do it for one, you would have to do it for all, and they cannot call everyone. There is no staff for that as they said they are the second largest locality in Virginia. They deny the application and send a letter. Apartment numbers are critical to their process.

Barcodes

Return correspondence barcode isn't scan-able. Some barcodes VERIS generates aren't recognized by the system. Lots of reports have barcodes, but the scanning feature doesn't support many of the barcodes generated. Barcodes are not standard within VERIS or within a locality's process. They need a consistency of barcodes. When correspondence is returned, they have to manually black out the barcode on the letter and rescan it as the VERIS search function does not recognize it. This goes back to the search capability within VERIS and how it is not comprehensive.

Inactivity clock

If a voter is sent a correspondence and has participated in elections in the past, the clock starts to track whether they may be an inactive voter. If they never vote, they will keep them as ACTIVE forever as Inactivity is determined based on voting history dates.

If they miss 2 federal elections, they switch to inactive. These things generate correspondence:

- Polling location change
- NCOA
- Redistricting – Alert voter of district change
- Felonies – Life feed from corrections

Form validation

On letters that use the comments and apply them to the letter, the form validation will allow you to leave a blank, which is problematic if no reason is given for cancellation. When there is an "other" option in the dropdown of the reports and correspondence, selecting "other" should bring up a free form field. Then whatever is put in that field should populate throughout the correspondence.

Letter generation issues

The system doesn't tell you when to run reports for correspondence. They would like alerts from VERIS.

The dates are constantly regenerated when the letter is looked at. Dates change when you generate reports as well. It would be good for VERIS to keep copies of generated reports also.



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Sometimes the comments submitted into VERIS do not show up on the form letter.

There are no prompts in VERIS to send notices. They would like a functional calendar in VERIS that ELECT kept up. Currently, the localities are expected to read the paper calendars and update their online calendars themselves. They would like ELECT to do this in VERIS so there are prompts to send various notices.

VERIS does not handle document retention. They want to see proper document retention handled by VERIS as each time they go back to a voter record, the report date changes to the current date. This creates problems with auditing as each time the letter is accessed, the date changes to the date looked at. There is no capture of something at the time it happened. A letter gets re-dated every time it is opened and a letter is generated (even if it never sent).

Letter template

GRs would like more control over the template. They report that there are many titles for the GR, which confuses the voter. Some letters have the wrong format.

Batch

When generating a batch for one user, it doesn't show up in the batch list in VERIS.

Other

When the reason for a particular correspondence is "other," there should be a way to populate the letter with the entire comments with the reason.

Redistricting and precinct management

If you have over 5K voters in a precinct in the last presidential election, you have to re-precinct the voters. Essentially, they keep the number of voters a manageable size (for Election Day, etc.). They use the locality statistics report (freeze until 2 years after Census). If they see 4000-4500 voters in 1 precinct, look to see which precinct caused issues in recent election, plan how to split (try to keep all voters in same house district), and identify location(s) for polling locations. They must bring plan to electoral board to approve the change, then get approval for city council. Then they notify ELECT (SBE 15 form) who generates the voter notices and changes the polling locations. After all is done, they need to purchase equipment, allocate staff, and change routes for machine techs.

They need to keep the number of voters in one precinct to manageable size. They want to make sure when they split a precinct that they do it evenly. The only time house districts change is when there is redistricting.



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The Planned Environment is created by ELECT. It is within VERIS and within the Production Environment, but there is a dropdown for “Current” or “Planned”. This is only in the Street File area of VERIS. No other localities have mentioned this VERIS feature.

GIS

They’ve been using more GIS to help validate the process. They use GIS through the City and work with the city on street issues. They do work with their County GIS department, but the city cannot get into VERIS so their assistance is limited.

They would like to be able to automatically update street blocks based on geographic changes.

ELECT does not maintain any type of GIS as far as they know. They think it would be good to have someone at state with GIS expertise and could help localities.

They would like to have GIS for redistricting. They’ve forgotten to update street blocks and people end up in wrong precinct because this is such a manual process, prone to errors. One issue is that nobody checks behind the localities to ensure that all streets are moved properly after re-precincting. VERIS does not do this. It would be great if the state had someone who could check behind them or if the new VERIS could help with this.

Polling location management

ELECT manages the polling locations. Even though they’re currently in a freeze, they recently had to update the precincts due to a court order.

ELECT has to be informed of polling location changes, but the form is paper. Even emergency polling locations have to be communicated to ELECT. GRs are unsure why they can’t perform this function themselves.

Issues

No one is behind us to ensure streets are moved properly. It would be nice to have mapping capabilities and state expertise available.

Citizen Portal

They want all fields required for voter registration in the Citizen Portal and DMV interface.

The rejection letter that is produced by the Citizen Portal is very confusing to the voter. Instructions need to be better. The voter has no idea what to do. The Citizen Portal needs a better user experience for both the voter and the GRs.



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VERIS should not let you put a non-Virginia address in the Citizen Portal. Currently it allows you to put a non-Virginia address in the address spot for residence. Mailing addresses can be anywhere. P.O. Boxes also slip thru on the portal. The portal does not do any checks. P.O. Boxes can only go in as mailing addresses. All of this should be handled through required fields.

DMV

The OVR administrative match does not always work.

They do not know how ELECT gets the information from DMV. They would like to see more work by ELECT to collaborate with DMV to solve issues.

The DMV-OVR Hopper does not distinguish where the registration comes from: DMV, Citizen Portal, 3rd Party, etc. The GRs need to know where the problems are. They do not necessarily need a separate hopper but some distinguishing is important.

The GRs want all required fields listed before the DMV-specific fields for the signature verification.

When dealing with DMV information, you need another set of credentials from the DMV Clerks Software. This enables them to see SSN, name, address, gender, etc. They want an interface between it and VERIS.

Paper OVR Hopper

It is easy to find the paper OVR record for a received paper application (use built-in search and search by last name). Appreciate the watermark is there (not necessarily the words it says) because it's an immediate signal that there is a record in the Paper OVR Hopper.

Registrations

The portal should prevent a voter entering an out-of-state address for a registered address. Required fields should be filled out before the DMV signature.

Street address overrides

Commercial properties are a big problem as they have to override a lot. VERIS doesn't remember previous decisions on a property. GRs would like the ability to permanently override an address from commercial to residential. However, the permanent override functionality should be role-limited to admins.



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Duplicates

Both DMV and Citizen Portal produce a lot of duplicates. In the DMV/OVR Hopper, it's unclear if the duplicate or problematic records are being generated by the Citizen Portal or the DMV. The only indicator is a field that has a value of "Web Verified."

Special characters

With paper forms, if the GRs see special characters in the forms, they remove the special characters and translate to the Latin equivalent. For names like "van Buren," the clerks combine the name to "vanBuren." For mononyms, the clerks enter the name twice into the first and last name fields. If the voters submit a voter registration through the Citizen Portal and use special characters, the GRs remove them and change to the Latin equivalent. VERIS does allow the use of special characters. However, if the voters add accents in the Citizen Portal, the GRs remove all of those accents as they report that looking up voters with VERIS' search is impossible with special characters.

Absentee

The system does not collect the excuses nor validate them for Absentee voters. As long as there is a code and a reason, it's good, but not all codes require a reason. For example, a voter may be going to the community college right across the street but as long as the codes/reasons are in VERIS, it is all good and they can vote absentee. The voter is taken at their word.

Petitions

Petition signers

Signers must be registered to vote to sign. If there is a petition signer that isn't registered, it would be nice if VERIS would allow you to automatically send a voter registration application to the signer. They believe VVRS used to do this.

Validation of the individual lines and signatures is a vast improvement.

They were asked about their favorite thing in VERIS and they said that overall they like petitions and how you need to account for every single signature. That was a good enhancement in their opinion. They like the enhancement and accountability.



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Election results and election night results

Results

Current system is each Chief and Assistant Chief get access to a Google form (unprotected). The sheet is updated with the location results. Download the sheet every 5 minutes and upload to VERIS (uploads slow down as the results slow down).

They start with Google forms to drive a Google sheet that each polling place chief and assistant chief get and need to fill out. This is all being done online. The sheet is locked. The City built a mobile app for them and they asked the City for resources. The mobile app creates a text file and that uploads in exact format for VERIS. No phone calls from pollworkers. Going back to the Google form, for the first half hour on election night there are downloads and uploads every 5 minutes.

For new process, the City IT department developed a native application to allow the Chiefs to update the election results. The updates are aggregated on a city server and one of the GRs will have an administrative web app that will allow access to the results file that will be uploaded to VERIS.

The IT department in the City that created the mobile app takes in the results and uploads them on to the City server. They have given the locality a web access admin module. Then they upload to VERIS.

They have parts of ES&S ElectionWare. However, they cannot use it. A court order is needed to open the envelope with the thumb drives on election night by the localities. This is why they do not use tabulation software.

Election night results

They have no problems with ENR. Once results are uploaded, the localities need to tell ELECT they have uploaded new results.

Post-election processing

Post-Election Processing seems to work OK for them. Abstracts come out fine. Creating certificates is a manual process. Both used to be manual, now only certificates are and abstracts come from VERIS.

Pollbook reconciliation

There are some pollbook users that fail to fully check-in voters, so the ballots cast might be higher than the number of voters processed through the pollbooks. VERIS flags this as an error. The GRs note that, even if the users go through training, this is simply an issue with some Officers having a low technical aptitude.



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Document scanning

Server space

Document server stops working after a server hits a limit. They need more room. There is no server space. They adjust the size of their files all of the time.

Pollbook management

They use Robis managing pollbook and lookup devices. Robis is used for electronic pollbooks and for voter lookups at the polls.

They want to be able to connect their electronic pollbooks directly to the internet on Election Day. They are real time with their satellites for absentee so all good there. No internet connectivity required.

General issues

NCOA Hopper

The NCOA hopper has no search feature. All other hoppers do.

Missing DMV registrations

A person received a confirmation for a transaction at the DMV and, during a license transaction, they registered to vote, but the record never showed up in the hopper.

Multiple windows

VERIS should allow users to have more than one window open with an active VERIS session.

DMV software

They use this DMV software to check on accuracy of changes to existing voter registrations, not updates and never for new registrations.

Exports

Everything that comes into VERIS, must be exportable from VERIS. We need it in machine readable format (Excel), not just PDF. Some of the Excel reports aren't super useful. Self-service reporting would be great. They get many public records requests and need to be able to pull things out in a usable way.

COMET

Candidates use software, COMET, for campaign finance. GRs sometimes need to fine candidates. It would be nice to be able to manage the communications in VERIS.



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A candidate can be fined by not filing on time as the public has a right to know this information. If a candidate keeps their campaign open but does not keep their statement of organization up-to-date, they can also be fined. Campaigns have 10 days to update COMET with the change.

Background processes fail to run

Hoppers sometimes don't populate.

There is a process to update the voter registration records to identify the last absentee voter. This process is run to generate a file to populate the pollbooks. 24 hours later, ELECT informed them the process never ran.

Officers of Elections management

They were promised this feature when VERIS was developed. They expected to be able to record Officers documents (Oath of Office), record trainings, payroll, location assignments.

They thought they would be able to manage their pollworkers in VERIS. They waited for this functionality that was promised but never came. They expected to be able to do payroll, and assignments; however, they are calling their pollworkers, emailing them, and setting up polling place assignments outside of VERIS. They purchased other solutions to do this. Some GRs use Easy Vote. Others use PollChief by Konnech. One GR's former locality uses Salesforce. They would like ELECT to not to promise something they could not deliver as they were literally waiting with stop gap measures before purchasing something.

Admin

VERIS should list everyone in their office with their contact information to aid in problem resolution (i.e. give the resolver the contact information).

Security

Multi-factor authentication

They use their personal phones with the Okta application installed as their second factor.

Candidate filings

They want a better tool to move between petitions and candidates. Candidates use COMET for all of their campaign finance. Candidates are not really in VERIS, but all of the information is dumped into VERIS.



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They have to impose civil penalties on candidates and they have to track this correspondence. They want to produce a customizable letter. They said that Campaign Finance is in COMET and the GRs are not in COMET which presents issues. They are supposed to be notified if anything happens that requires the candidates to be fined. However, there has recently been a glitch with no notifications coming through to the GRs. Due to this glitch in notifications, the GRs are missing opportunities to fine candidates. They feel they should not have to rely on manual processes.

Communication and training

The ELECT ListServ is not very functional for real communication between the localities. The most common question on it is “Is VERIS down?” This happens at random times when things are not busy.

Opportunities for training on VERIS are few and far between. There needs to be more and better options for the localities. Timing of ELECT training is challenging. ELECT training is in June. The localities do not utilize regional meetings as well as they should, but are looking to improve this and move them out of restaurants and into locality offices.

Collaboration

They like the survey we did. They are sharing with their whole staff and appreciate being asked for their opinions.

ELECT has Work Groups, but they are for GRs and many feel they should not be made up of “higher ups” but those who actually work on the system. In some localities that is the GR, but in other larger ones, it is not.

They would like to see a VERIS User Group again. ELECT has been very good at making fixes lately to VERIS. They are happy with ELECT.